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Curious Case of *Khanda Vivah*: Sustaining 'Aan' through Marital Alliance

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Curious Case of *Khanda Vivah*: Sustaining ‘Aan’ through Marital Alliance¹

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Abstract:

The main objective of this paper is to bring into light the engaging primary source titled, ‘*Khanda Byah/Vivah ri Bahi*’ and with that, to explore the very form of marriage called *Khanda Vivah*². This paper further assesses the many ways in which the multiple marital alliances of royal Rajput household in Marwar, Jodhpur in particular, were negotiated, celebrated, ritualised, contested, exploited and subsequently assimilated, in order to facilitate the political pragmatism and financial exigencies of the times and to further consolidate Rajput social and moral ethic of ‘aan’ or honour. Were these marriages mere ceremonial occasions to ‘exchange’ daughters for status and power or was there any other dimension to them? One registers here that the polygamous family served as the domain, where multiple political alliances were forged within an internally competitive military and ruling elite. The paper discusses the historical context for multiple marriages amongst the royal Rajput households of Marwar and how deeply embedded and enmeshed, were the roots of the same, within the larger Rajput political economy of the period.

With the detailed case study of *Khanda Vivah* in Maharaja Takht Singh’s period in c.1843-1873, this paper explores the varied ritualistic and performative aspects of this marital alliance between Jadechiji Pratap Kanwar of Jamnagar and Maharaja Takht Singh of Jodhpur. My focus would be to try and understand the essentiality of the maintenance of the ethic of ‘aan’/ honour, hierarchy and status within the royal Rajput household and to further assess, how the institution of elite polygamy amongst the Rajputs became integral to the consolidation of power and sustenance of ‘aan’/honour.

Keywords: *aan*, *rajput*, *kul*, *legitimacy*, *janana deorhi*, *khanda vivah*, *household*

¹This paper is the revised version of the talk delivered at Centre for Contemporary Studies, PMML, New Delhi on 3rd April, 2025. It is intensely based on the study of the primary document titled as *Khanda Byav/Vivah ri bahi* from the time period of Maharaja Takht Singh of Jodhpur (c.1843-1873). I would like to express my immense gratitude to all the Staff officials at Prime Ministers Museum and Library (PMML), Teen Murti House, Delhi, to all the Staff members at Maharaja Man Singh Pustak Prakash (MMPP), Mehrangarh, Jodhpur and to all the research team members at Rajasthani Shodh Sansthan, Chopasani Jodhpur, Rajasthan for their kind support and constant encouragement.

² This was a form of marriage performed by sending the *Khanda*, a double - edged sword of the Maharaja in order to represent him, meticulously following a wide range of *darbari* protocols and rituals, representative of the *aan*/honour, hierarchy and status of every member who participated in this marriage procession.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: SITUATING MULTIPLE MARITAL ALLIANCES IN RAJPUT POLITY

The institution of marriage as practised among the royal Rajputs, seems to have provided space for the dialogue of varied potential dimensions namely political, emotional, social, cultural and economic among others. A social field of multiple marriages with varied motives confirms and registers the prominent presence of the institution of multiple marriages within the elite Rajput society.

It becomes imperative here to register that there were indeed several reasons, cultural matrices, interpretations, socio-economic contexts into which one can historically situate the institution of marriage among the royal Rajputs. Equally significant if not more, are the concerns about locating for the visibility of various historical players within the royal household inclusive of women, men alongwith a wide range of domestic attendants like *davris*, *badarans* (female attendants of varied hierarchies) *pardayats* (concubine), *darji* (tailor), *rangrez* (dyer), *sunar* (goldsmith), *deorhidars* (palace guards), *gayans* (attendants for singing) among others.

While registering the compelling significance of the varied historiographical debates around the notions of identity, workings of patriarchy, concerns around visibility and agency of women which has enriched the larger discourse around our understanding of an institution like marriage, this paper focuses primarily on the interlinkages between the Rajput notion of honour/ 'aan' and the workings of a polygamous household.

The entry points, in order to understand these series of intersectional ties would be to try and understand the nature of Rajput identity based on *kul-bhaiyad* and *sagapan* networks and the ways in which the notions of 'honour' and 'loyalty' were thus invested 'in' and 'through' them. In turn, sustaining of these notions was not merely 'performative' or 'gestural' in nature but perhaps, emerged 'essential' to be able to create a 'distinct', 'exclusive' identity for the royal Rajputs existing in a contentious hierarchical structures of governance. Assertion of the notions of honour/ 'aan'— whether of clan or individual- through varied institutional practices, multiple marriages in the present case, further legitimised through detailed rituals and protocols, thus acquired a significant stature in the domain of Pre-modern Rajput political economy.

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It is in this context, it becomes significant to try and understand the complex processes that enabled the making of the Rajput identity. Historians like B.D. Chattopadhyaya and Norman P. Ziegler have focused on concerns around social mobility, pulls and pressures of the regional politics as well as lineage, which collectively worked towards the process of cultural assimilation and consolidation of a distinct Rajput identity further facilitating culture assimilation during the 7th and 12th centuries of local chiefs and warrior groups. The reach for acquiring power and legitimacy by these groups of warrior chiefs further increased their greater reliance on legitimacy through establishing genealogies, brahminical rituals, alliances through marriages into ruling families. Shaping of historical narratives through heroic ballads, genealogical records (*vamshavalis*) remained a recurrent feature in various Rajput royal households in Pre-colonial India. Inter-marriages within elite families among several other reasons remained a significant feature of this larger process of acquiring politico-cultural legitimacy amongst the Rajput clans.

The engagements around the 'ideal' of Rajput identity further becomes interesting with Dirk Kolff's argument, nudging towards varied negotiations at work for using the term Rajput not only as a caste but also used by people engaged with the work of military labour to renegotiate their existent identities.³

Marriage serving as a medium to engage the agency of the royal women to dissolve a feud or pacify the opponent has remained a widely accepted phenomena in Rajput society, the bride thereby 'upholding' and 'sustaining' the honour/ 'aan' of her clan. Royal women thus featured as representatives of their natal households and were simultaneously negotiating their individual status as well as the status of their respective clan within the contentious *janana deorhi* (apartments where mostly females resided in the royal Rajput household). Sabita Singh's work explores marriage as a significant institution with details around marriage rituals, registering its impact on the wider social mores in Medieval Rajasthan.⁴

The usage of 'marriage' as a mode of cementing political and diplomatic concerns was not necessarily unique to Rajput elite society. We find parallels of the same existing within several other royal households in Medieval world. For instance, the legal marriages of Ottoman rulers and their sons in the 14th and early 15th centuries were contracted with

³ For details see, Kolff, Dirk, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market of Hindustan, 1450-1850*. CUP, 2002.

⁴ See, Singh, Sabita, *The Politics of Marriage in Medieval India: Gender and Alliance in Rajasthan*, New Delhi: OUP, 2019.

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princesses of neighbouring dynasties, both Christian powers of Rumelia and Muslim powers of Anatolia. The rationale behind the inter-dynastic marital alliance was possibly to enhance prospects of strengthening the state's military as well as diplomatic standing in fluctuating political scenarios. Most Ottoman marriages were arranged as part of the negotiation of an offensive alliance or at the conclusion of a combat or to symbolize the defeated party's submission and acceptance of vassal status. In a way, marriage marked the submission of some princely houses to the Ottomans and bonds of alliance with others.⁵

As a mode of asserting as well as acquiring status, royal Rajputs negotiated between variety of marriage practices, which were subsequently reconfigured to prove conducive in different historical and social contexts, further influenced and shaped by changes in political, social and individual situations.⁶ Nicholas Dirks argues that marriage ties in the Pre-colonial period were important ritual-symbolic forms through which the authority of 'little kings' was constituted.⁷ Marriage bears directly on the enhancement, conservation and dissipation of the economic and 'symbolic' capital of the kingship group and has remained one of the major mechanisms of 'social reproduction'.⁸ The notions of marriage and power were so closely linked that marriage emerged as a strategy to acquire, enhance and further consolidate power.

Sustaining *Kul - Bhaiyad* and *Saga* Ties Through Marriage

The structure of the *kul* and the *bhaiyad* were closely linked to the systems of land ownership, and to the system of political power and sovereignty in the states of Rajasthan. The *kul* included all those related to a common ancestor by ties of male blood. The *bhaiyad* was the brotherhood composed of the sons and brothers of the ruler who held power over land conquered by them. At its simplest, the chief of the *kul*, the clan was the hereditary head. The rule of primogeniture held, although this was not always adhered to in practice. The territory was divided and inherited amongst the various branches of the dominant clan. While the sovereignty of the chief was accepted, he was at the same time treated as the first among equals. The *bhaiyad* was held together not just by a common material interests in wielding

⁵ Peirce, Leslie, *Imperial Harem, : Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*, (Oxford, 1993), p.29.

⁶ For a discussion on marriage as a strategy see Kasturi, Malavika. *Embattled Identities, Rajput Lineages and the Colonial State in Nineteenth Century North India*, (New Delhi, 2002) , p.102

⁷ Dirks, Nicholas *The Hollow Crown: An Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom*, (New Delhi, 1987), pp. 239-44.

⁸ Bourdieu, Pierre. 'Marriage Strategies as Strategies of Social Production', trans E. Forster, R. Foster and O. Ranum eds. *Family and Society, Selections from the Annales*, (Baltimore,1976), p.124.

power over a particular region, but by close-knit bonds of loyalty and fidelity to each other and thus assuring to the continuity of their own rule. The two entities, brotherhood and land, were felt to be inseparably linked and mutually supportive.

Kinship is an organization and organization gives power. But who gets organized in the process needs to be understood and how and at what costs. For Norman P. Ziegler,⁹ Rajput concept of honour, both collective and individual, as well as the concern with its continuation formed an integral part of the overall issue with the maintenance of power and rank of the *bhaiyad* or brotherhood. Two rules which brought this out most clearly were - first, the emphasis on the avenging of the murder of kinsmen, and second, the rule expressing that no killing took place within the same group of kin.

This laid emphasis on the concept of solidarity, whereas the expectation was that individuals whose social existence was defined with reference to the *bhaiyad*, would render support, particularly against outsiders. From here we could further notice that interesting yet complex notions of fidelity to the *bhaiyad*, ensured the continuity of an ideal notion of 'living in service' to this structure of power, thus delineating the ideal of loyalty being the 'glue' to the longevity of *bhaiyad's* power among Rajputs. These notions of support, solidarity, fidelity, loyalty remained crucial as binding constituents in Rajput polity.

In this context of complex relations between the raja and his clan-based chiefs and within the ruler's household itself, political alliances established through marriage gradually came to play a distinctive role. The institution evolved in such a manner that rulers and chiefs negotiated the balance of power within their own clans through exogamous marriages that brought with them allegiance and military resources from other clans.

The clans with whom marriage alliances were established were called *sagaor genayat*. They were often originally based in a different territory, and therefore relatively independent of the intrigues for power within a particular Rajput kingdom. The relative status of the bride's family was often asserted through providing her with an entourage that assisted her in her marital household and on several occasions moved alongwith her to her-in-laws.

⁹ Ziegler, Norman, 'Rajput Loyalties During the Mughal Period', in J.F. Richards(ed.) *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, (Delhi,1998), pp. 242-284.

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Rajputs had two kinds of *saga* relationships viz. *ekawara* and *dowara*¹⁰. *Ekawara* referred to the kind in which one Rajput family gave their daughter in marriage to another clan but did not take theirs in return whereas *dowara sagapan* implied reciprocal ties of marriage by giving and receiving daughters in marriage. *Dowara sagapan* was practised with the family of equal status whereas in *ekawara sagapan* ties, marriages were often arranged either in the form by sending the *dola* (palanquin) or at times, sending the *khanda* (sword) of the maharaja concerned.

Dola marriages were also of two kinds - one was when *dola*, approaching from the bride's side would go directly to the *janana deorhi* and for this kind of marriage, Jodhpur household had its own set of regulations. Second, was when the sword, or in some cases, turban of the raja was sent with officials of his court and three *pheras* were taken with the raja's sword and for the remaining four, raja himself proceeded ahead from his territory towards the *dola* coming from the bride's side and performed the rituals.

Another kind was that of *atta-satta* form of *sagai* (engagement), in which daughters were given in marriage to a household and also taken in return from them in marriage. This was also done to pacify *bair* or feuds. Rajputs used to resolve smaller feuds by sharing opium with each other whereas *bair* of greater magnitude reached resolution by giving daughter in marriage.¹¹ Thereby, from the above mentioned forms of marriage being celebrated within the royal Rajput household, we have noticed how women were employed in the ritual of marriage.

It would be interesting here to explore how Rajput rulers and chiefs exploited marital ties to assert control over subordinates and gain power over rivals. Rajputs were divided into *gotras*, such as Rathor, Chauhan and Sisodia. The *gotra*, a broad kinship group possessed of a common ancestor,¹² defined the boundaries of exogamy. *Gotra* exogamy and endogamy together created a powerful network of cross-clan alliances in the region. These often transcended territorial boundaries between one Rajput kingdom and another.

Uma Chakravarti points out that the rules that social groups have created for the exchange of women, ritualized as marriage, have been endogamy and exogamy. All societies have some

¹⁰ *Jodhpur Rajya ki dastur bahi*, S.No. 13506, Rajasthani Shodh Sansthan, Chopasani. This bahi has also been edited and titled as *Jodhpur Rajya ki dastur bahi* by Vikram Singh Rathor, (Jodhpur, 1995), p.95.

¹¹ *Report Mardumshumari Rajmarwar* 1891, Marwar Census Report 1891, second edition, (Jodhpur, 1997), p.19.

¹² Ziegler, Norman. 'Rajput Loyalties During the Mughal Period', pp. 242-284.

principle of exogamy within which one cannot marry because people within this circle are regarded too close a set of kin. The continuation of the male *vansa* or line has been the primary aim of marriage which requires a girl from a different line to be brought in.¹³

Two people might meet in friendship and exchange gifts and yet quarrel, but intermarriage connects them somewhat in a permanent manner.¹⁴ Concerns like property and exchange in women, matter of 'exchanging' women between families, creation of marriage pools have been noticed across the world to sustain the values of honour and status of the men and family on a wider scale.

Gayle Rubin argues that the 'exchange' of women has figured as a shorthand for expressing that the social relations of kinship system specify that men have certain rights in female kin and that women do not have the same rights in their male kin. It is a system in which women do not have full rights to themselves. Thus, the 'exchange' of women appears to be a powerful and a problematic concept¹⁵. The marriage 'transactions' i.e. the gifts and materials which circulate in the ceremonies marking a marriage - are a rich source of data for determining exactly who has, which rights, in whom.

Beti Dekar Bair Bhajna: Dissolving Feuds by 'Giving' Daughter

In Rajasthan, '*aan*'/honour was at stake or got affected if one failed to dissolve a particular *bair* or feud, he was involved in. No money compensation was acceptable for the termination of the feud. Only *dharti* or *dulhan* from the guilty clan or family carried enough worth for the pacification of the feud.

Tracing the historical context of the marital alliances and its association with sustenance of clan's honour/*aan*, we do get evidences in support - for instance, Ummed Singh of Sirohi saved his territory from the attack of Maharaja Ajit Singh of Jodhpur by offering money and giving his daughter in marriage to the Maharaja.¹⁶ Merely offering money was not enough to dissolve the feud and cement the ties. In another instance, with a resolve to end their rivalry with the Bhatias and simultaneously enhance their power, Mohils gave their daughter in

¹³ For more details, see Chakravarti, Uma *Gendering Caste Through a Feminist Lens, Theorizing Feminism*, series editor Maithreyi Krishnaraj, (Calcutta, 2006), pp. 27-36 .

¹⁴ Strauss, Levi *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, (Boston, 1969), p.481.

¹⁵ Rubin, Gayle 'The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex ', in Joan Wallach Scott (ed.) *Oxford Readings in Feminism*, (Oxford, New York, 1996), p.116-120.

¹⁶ Das, Shyamal *Vir Vinod*, Vol.I, pp. 11-13.

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marriage to the Bhati chiefs and thereby ensured their support for troubled times.¹⁷ When Udai Singh was declared Maharana of Mewar, the chiefs of Udaipur got him married to the daughter of Abhay Raj Songara of Pali, who was a powerful military leader of that region. The aim of this marital alliance was to strengthen Udai Singh's position in order to fight Banveer, the usurper of Mewar throne. As a result, Songara offered valuable support in struggle against Banveer and in securing the throne for Udai Singh.¹⁸ In another case, the founder of the Bikaner state, establishing matrimonial alliances with the BhatIs further strengthened Rao Bika's political position.¹⁹

Among Rajputs, it was considered a matter of dishonour for the bride's side to refuse a marriage proposal, especially if it was sent from a family of higher status. The refusal could perhaps lead to enmity. This particular notion of honour further made the practice of multiple marriages or polygamy an accepted solution to resolve this issue alongwith the view that alliances into several Rajput households ensured their support for the concerned raja, further consolidating his political status.

Anxieties of the similar resolve got manifested in an instance where Rawal Kanharde of Jalore sent a proposal of his daughter to Rawal Lakhsensen which put him in a dilemma because if he accepted it, that would have annoyed his favourite wife, Sodhi of Umarnkot and refusal of it would have 'inflicted' dishonour.²⁰

Ramya Sreenivasan argues that for the period between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries, the Rajput kingdoms were going through a process of gradual transition from clan-based polities to territorial units structured primarily upon the ideologies of classical kingship. This historical transition was ongoing and was always contested. The kings and chiefs asserted their respective and often mutually incompatible rights. This constant struggle for authority and display of legitimacy longed for security at some level, which possibly found its expression in the system of polygamous marriages Rajput had and the distinctness

¹⁷*Nainsi ri Khyat*, Vol 2, p.165. In another instance Rangdev, the Bhati chief of Jaisalmer killed maternal uncle of Somo Rajput. Somo approached Rao Chunda for seeking revenge in his case against the Bhati chief. For this favour, Somo promised to offer hundred horses and hundred girls, *Nainsi ri Khyat*, Vol.2, p.312.

¹⁸ Festing, Gabrielle. *From the Land of Princes*, (London,1904) p. 107-118.

¹⁹ Arora, Shashi. *Rajasthan Mein Nari ki Stithi*, (Bikaner, 1981) p. 38.

²⁰*Nainsi ri Khyat* Vol.2, p. 40.

of their *sagapan* ties. It provided rajas with military resources and a network of alliances, used both against refractory chiefs and in the service of the Mughal emperor.²¹

Among the political functions that marriage served, the daughter of a defeated chieftain was 'offered' customarily in a gesture of political submission. Genealogies of the period reveal how the custom functioned as an index of a ruler's status. The seventeenth-century *vansavali* describes the status of Bapa Rawal, the founder of the Sisodia lineage, by narrating how the rulers of Kannauj, Ujjain, Gujarat, Marwar, Sambhar and Delhi 'gave' their daughters in marriage to Bapa after being defeated in battle, and accepted his overlordship (*page laga*)²².

The evolving pattern of matrimonial alliances reflected changes in the relative political status of the Rajput clans. When the Rathors of Marwar rose to prominence in the mid-fifteenth century, marriage alliances with them were keenly sought after. Similarly, with the entry of clans like Shekhawat and Baghela into the mansabdari system of the Mughals, their increased prestige was reflected in the matrimonial arena as well.²³

Working within the framework of a polygamous household, Rajput rajas had their matrimonial ties with various clans. Since Rajput rulers believed in clan exogamy and so were precluded from getting married into their own clan whereas it can be noticed that they had established marital ties with all other important clans. In Rajput society, a person having a wife from a particular clan was considered as the son-in-law of that entire clan and sub-clan.

Exhibiting Honour and Hierarchy Through the Ritualistic Codes of Rajput Marital Alliances

The rites related with marriage provided an occasion for giving expression to varied relationships at different levels that is to say, the bond between bride and the groom, within kinsmen, and between other women relations in Rajput society. Marriage could be perceived as a central point of an individual's social existence, converging many concerns around it like that of honour, status and power²⁴. Rituals involved and exhibited during the course of a

²¹ Sreenivasan, Ramya. 'Honoring the Family: Narratives and Politics of Kinship in Pre-colonial Rajasthan', in Indrani Chatterjee, (ed.) *Unfamiliar Relations, Family and History in South Asia*, (New Delhi, 2004), p.51.

²² Bhati, Hukum Singh ed. *Sisod Vanshavali evam Rajasthan ke rajvaron ki Vanshavaliyan*, (Udaipur, 1995) p.26.

²³ Joshi, Varsha *Polygamy and Purdah*, Rawat Publications, 1995.p.53.

²⁴ Roy, Kumkum *The Power of Gender and the Gender of Power*, (New Delhi, 2011), pp. 223-240.

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marriage can be seen as symbolic and communicative in nature, delineating the codes of behaviour, expressing the event into a public, very visible enactment of a ritual which was ideally regulated.

The royal household of Jodhpur had detailed and distinct code of marriage protocols for the households they married their daughters into, primarily based on the nature of the status of the respective household, involved. In case of a Jodhpur marriage being performed with the household of higher and honourable status, *barat* (marriage procession) used to proceed to their house from the Jodhpur household, these were namely the royal households of Udaipur, Jaipur, Bundi and Jaisalmer. Though *barat* used to proceed to Udaipur household but Udaipur being at a higher pedestal in terms of status over Jodhpur, *dowara sagapan* was not acceptable to Udaipur. In *dowara sagapan*, both the households involved were supposed to move with their respective *barat* procession and gather, or rest at a *dera* (residing place for the *barat*), at a place hundred miles away from their respective territories²⁵.

On the other hand, royal households of Jodhpur and Jaipur shared *dowara sagapan* ties amongst themselves.²⁶ In case of Jaisalmer, only when the marriage was between the son of Jodhpur raja and daughter of the Jaisalmer raja, *barat* used to go from Jodhpur and if the marriage was between the daughter of Jaisalmer raja's brother and the son of Jodhpur raja then, only *dola*²⁷ was sent from Jodhpur. The word 'dola' is available in both Prakrit and Sanskrit languages, it is used to indicate a four side covered carriage usually carried on their shoulders by workers from *kahar* community. However, in Rajasthani texts, the term *dola* also refers to a kind of marriage in which the *dola/palki* (carriage with the bride seated in it) would travel to the groom's household and later in the presence of the relatives from the groom's side, the marriage ceremony would be performed. On that occasion whether the groom would reach first or join the celebration after reaching the bride on a selected place, was a subject of social protocol, whereas usually brides after the completion of the marriage rituals at their natal house, move into a carriage or *dholi* and proceed towards the groom's house.

The ritualistic protocols were performed with diligence in the course of the marriage ceremony as marriage was not merely a ceremonial event among royal Rajputs, it was a

²⁵ *Jodhpur Rajya ki dastur bahi*, Vikram Singh Rathor (ed.) pp.92-95.

²⁶ *Jodhpur Rajya ki dastur bahi*, Vikram Singh Rathor (ed.) pp. 92-93.

²⁷ For a detailed discussion on *dola* custom of marriage see Arora, Shashi 'Dola Custom in the Marriages of Medieval India - A Social Political Study', pp. 83-91, *Shodh Patrika, Varsh* 60, 1- 4, Jan-Dec.2009, Udaipur.

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moment in time to structure, define, configure and re-figure, claims of honour, status and hierarchy within the royal household. An interesting example comes in when a Rajput princess, daughter of Baldeo Maheshdasot of Sanchor was assigned the status of *paswan* rather than that of a rani by Maharaja Ajit Singh of Jodhpur because her *dola* by default had entered directly into the *janana deorhi* without performing the marriage rituals outside the fort as prescribed by the marriage ritualistic code of royal Rajputs in case of *dola* marriages.²⁸ So, not just the act of marriage but the ways in which it was performed decided the nature of the relationship and status of the newly married Rani within the *janana deorhi*.

We get several instances of marriages being performed among the royal Rajputs through the *dola* custom of marriage. Raja Sur Singh of Jodhpur, married many Rajput princesses under *dola* custom.²⁹ Suraj Kanwar Devriji who was married to Maharaja Vijay Singh of Jodhpur and Sardar Kanwar Tanwarji, who was married to Maharaja Bhim Singh of Jodhpur, under *dola* custom of marriage were subsequently adorned with the status of *maharani* or chief queen.³⁰

In V.S. 1776 Maharaja Ajit Singh's daughter *Baiji* Surajkanwar got married to Amber Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh and *dera* (resting place for the *barat*) was made at Sursagar. There has been a custom of distributing *gul* (*gul batana*) or *gud* meaning jaggery, in Rajasthan at auspicious occasions especially at the time of marriage. It was usually distributed to the houses of close relatives of the royal household, like to the ranis, princesses, *pardayats*, other *khamps* of Rajputs: Chauhan, Champawat, Rawalot, Kupanwat, Mertiya, Jodha, Jetawat, Karnot, Karamsot, Patawat, Bala, Bhati, Songara, Tunwar, Gehlot Rajput *khamps*, Singhwi, Bhandari, Kothari, Pancholi. On this occasion, servants of the royal household were also given *gul*.³¹

On the occasion of the marriage, *Vinayakji* (Lord Ganesha) was to be worshipped. It was customary to go to the house of the *kumhar* (potter) and bring the idol of *Ganesha*. There the potter's wheel was to be worshipped first, then the idol was received from the potter and in return he was offered gifts like jaggery, coconut, rice, wheat flour etc. During the time of the marriage of *Baiji* Suraj Kanwar, coming of *Vinayakji* inside the *janana deorhi* was

²⁸Jodhpur Rajparivar ri bahi, p.104.

²⁹Jodhpur Rajya ki Khyat, ed. Raghuvir Singh and Manohar Singh Ranawat, (Jaipur, 1988), p.157.

³⁰Jodhpur Rajpariwar ri bahi, p.114-118.

³¹Maharaja Ajit Singh evam Maharaja Man Singh ri bahi, S. No.833, V.S.1776 jyestha vadi 9 - 1881 phalgun vadi 9, M.M.P.P., Jodhpur.

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considered an auspicious occasion, the deity was worshipped at first, following which, *kakan dore* (a form of ritualistic string) were tied to the hands of Baiji Surajkanwar. *Vinayakji* was offered *ghee* after this. Baiji was offered *nazar nichhrawal* (gifts and offerings) by the members of the *janana deorhi*.

Bai Sa Suraj Kanwar's aunt Chhota Bhattiyani offered rupees 20 in *nazar* whereas other ladies in *janana deorhi* offered *nazar nichhrawal* to the bride princess. For instance rupee 1 was offered by *seekdar* Dayaldas's daughter-in-law. After the ritual of *nazar nichhrawal* was completed, *lapsi* (a dish made with jaggery, ghee and sugar, as *prasad*) was distributed. This was followed by the customs of *ratijoga* (collective celebratory gathering organised for the entire night) and sending of *banole*³². The custom of *toranvandana* was celebrated during the marriages to test the strength of the bridegroom. On the occasion of Baiji Surajkanwar's marriage, Sawai Raja Jai Singh performed the ritual of *toran vandana*³³. In case of Jodhpur royal household, *toran* gates were ritually made at five different locations within the fort viz. at *baki pol* (gate), *loha pol*, *mardana deorhi*, *singuria pol*, *janana deorhi*, and *Nagnechia matathan* (temple), costing a total of five rupees.³⁴ This was followed by the custom of *hathleva* (another marriage ritual) after which Surajkanwar's marriage with Raja Sawai Jai Singh was completed. Then came the custom of *kanyadan*³⁵, this was done by the relatives and also some distinguished officials of the State.

Baiji Surajkanwarji was given several ornaments of gold and silver studded ornaments in *dahej* (dowry), viz. *navsarhar*, *kakan*, *beetiyani*, *tika*, *ghadiya*, *dugdugi*. Description of the same as follows :

1 *navsarhar wag shree mataji ro ghati ko*

1 *dugdugi gar kau ri tare uri*

3 *manak mota*

1 *pano moto*

³² *Banole* meant invitations sent to the new bride for feast by the relatives.

³³ *Toran* is a crown shaped object mostly made of coloured wooden pieces, tied and suspended across gateways of the house of the bride and usually pictures of birds are on it. For the more on ritual of *toran bandhana* see report *Mardum Shumari Raj Marwar* 1891, p.28; also see details about the ritual of *toran marano* in Karine Schomer, 'Testing the Groom: Riddling at Rajasthani Weddings As Cultural Performance' in Schomer and others (eds). *The Idea of Rajasthan*, Vol.I p.114; also see Nagar, Mahendra Singh. *Marwar ke Rajwansh ki Sanskritik Paramparayein* Vol.II, pp. 337-338.

³⁴ *Maharaja Ajit Singh evam Maharaja Man Singh ri bahi*, S. No.833, V.S.1776 *jyestha* 1881 *phalgun vadi* 9, M.M.P.P., Jodhpur ; also in *Report Mardumshumari Raj Marwar* 1891.

³⁵ *Maharaja Ajit Singh evam Maharaja Man Singh ri bahi*, S. No.833, V.S.1776 *jyestha vadi* 9 - 1881 *phalgun vadi* 9, M.M.P.P., Jodhpur.

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3 *heera mota*

4 *chhota manak aur chhota mota manak pana duniya ne upare sare e motiyan ri badh*

4 *bajubanda ri jodhiya 4 tola 14*

4 *gujariya ri jodi 4 tola 15*

Apart from this, various kinds of dresses were given and also utensils of gold and silver. Animals were also given in *dahej*, for instance:

2 *hathi* (elephant)

40 *ghoda* (horse) *soneri sagat ra- 20 rupari sagat ra*

1 *rath* (chariot)

1 *bahel* 1 unth (camel)

In another marriage at Bikaner royal household, Maharaja Gaj Singh (c.1745-1787) gave rupees 21077 in *dahej* to his daughter. Marriages of Maharaja Ajit Singh's (of Jodhpur) daughter Baiji Abhay Kanwar with Pratap Singhji in V.S.1847, Maharaja Man Singh's (of Jodhpur) daughter Baiji Sirekanwar with Raja Jagat Singh of Jaipur in V.S.1870, Baiji Udaykanwar with Bundi Hada Ummad Singh in V.S.1818 and Baiji Swarupkanwar with Bundi Raja Ram Singh in V.S.1881, were also performed with these similar set of rituals, celebrated by the members of the royal household. ³⁶

³⁶*Maharaja Ajit Singh evam Maharaja Man Singh ri Bahi (Kunwariyon ke byah ri)*, S.No.833 V.S. 1776 *jyesta vadi 9* to 1881 *phalgun vadi 9*, M.M.P.P., Jodhpur; also see *Maharaja Man Singhji ke Baiji Shree Swarupkanwar re Vivah ri bahi*, S.No.400, V.S. 1886, *phalgun vadi 9*, M.M.P.P., Jodhpur.

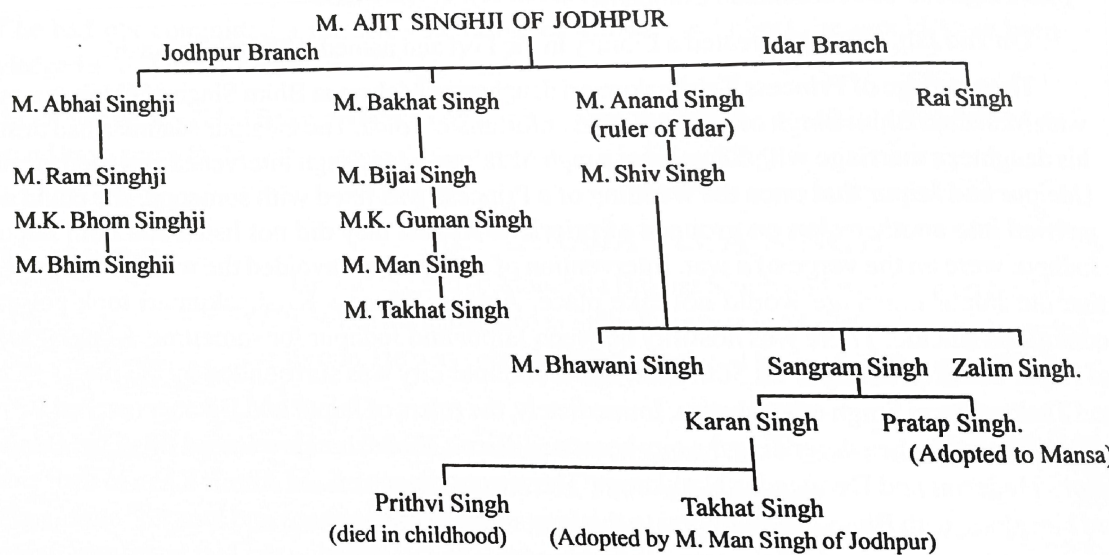
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II

A CASE STUDY OF *KHANDA VIVAH* OF MAHARAJA TAKHT SINGH OF JODHPUR: CONSOLIDATING ETHIC OF 'AAN' AND HIERARCHY

In Jodhpur, after the death of Maharaja Man Singh without leaving a male heir to the throne, the closest in line of descent was Takht Singh. His nobles and ladies of the *janana deorhi* favoured adopting Takht Singh as a minor, succeeding to the throne.³⁷

Tracing the lineage of Maharaja Takht Singh of Jodhpur below³⁸:



Considered as an outsider by most of the nobles of the Jodhpur Darbar and in an strategic attempt to gain as well as assert his legitimacy, Maharaja Takht Singh (c.1843-1873) established matrimonial relations with almost every significant non-Rathor Rajput rulers of Rajasthan and secondly, he provided jagirs for his sons borne not out of marriage but from concubines, so as to create his own nobility. He designated them as Rao Rajas. Here's a list of the all the matrimonial alliances of Maharaja Takht Singh:

³⁷ For more details see, *Maharaja Takht Singh ri Khyat*, (ed.) N.S. Bhati, (Jodhpur, 1993).

³⁸ For more details see, Nagar, Mahendra Singh *The Genealogical Survey, Royal House of Marwar and Other States*. MMPP, Jodhpur, 2004

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Table: Names and *thikanas* of the Ranis of Maharaja Takht Singh of Jodhpur:

1. Rani Gulabkanwar Ranawatji from <i>thikana</i> Damade, Mewar
2. Rani Mankanwar Bada Bhattiyani from <i>thikana</i> Osia
3. Rani Jatankanwar Chawadi from <i>thikana</i> Mandsa in Gujarat
4. Rani Bakhtawar Kanwar Ladi Bhattiyani from <i>thikana</i> Bhikamkaur
5. Rani Udaikanwar Ladi Ranawat from <i>thikana</i> Damodar
6. Rani Mukankanwar Bada Tanwarji from <i>thikana</i> Kalewa
7. Rani Hawakanwar Teeja Bhattiyani from <i>thikana</i> Osia
8. Rani Pratapkanwar Jadechi from <i>thikana</i> Jamnagar
9. Rani Kisankanwar Chautha Devriji from <i>thikana</i> Sirohi
10. Rani Gulabkanwar Bada Devri <i>thikana</i> Sirohi
11. Rani Kusalkanwar Ladi Chawadi from <i>thikana</i> Mandsa
12. Rani Dhankanwar Badi Chawanji from <i>thikana</i> Dhatpara
13. Rani Inderkanwar Chautha Bhattiyani from <i>thikana</i> Godedhe
14. Rani Jetkanwar Panchama Bhattiyani <i>thikana</i> Vikukor
15. Rani Pratapkanwar Chhata Bhattiyani <i>thikana</i> Sidu, Bikaner
16. Rani Udaikanwar Jaiselmer, <i>thikana</i> Retachan, Jaiselmer
17. Rani Mukankanwar Ladi Chawanji from <i>thikana</i> Sankhwas
18. Rani Surajkanwar Teeja Chawan from Soyantara
19. Rani Richodkanwar Bageli from <i>thikana</i> Garhbariya
20. Rani Chandkanwar Devri from <i>thikana</i> Sirohi
21. Rani Anopkanwar Teeja Tanwarji from <i>thikana</i> Kelawa
22. Rani Chandkanwar Ladi Rewari from <i>thikana</i> Ranasar in Gujarat
23. Rani Surajkanwar Aanthwa Bhattiyani Derawari from <i>thikana</i> Jakhan
24. Rani Metabkanwar navma bhattiyani from <i>thikana</i> Beerlok
25. Rani Sumelkanwar Chautha Tanwarji from <i>thikana</i> Lakhasar in Bikaner
26. Rani Heerakanwar Chautha Chawanji from <i>thikana</i> Salwaas
27. Rani Anandkanwar Panchama Chawanji from <i>thikana</i> Barmer
28. Rani Daulatkanwar Teeja Devriji from <i>thikana</i> Sirohi
29. Choutha Devriji Kishankanwarji from <i>thikana</i> Nimbaj
30. Chouhan ninth Hemkanwarji from <i>thikana</i> Sankhwas ³⁹

³⁹ For more details see, *Ranimanga Bhaton ki Bahi*, p.132 ; also see, *Khanda Vivah ri bahi*, c.1843-1873, M.M.P.P., Jodhpur; *Chautha* here means fourth, *Panchma* as fifth, *Chhata* as sixth, *Aanthwa* as eighth and *Navma* as ninth; also see, *Maharaja Takht Singhji ri Khyat*.

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The above mentioned list of ranis of Maharaja Takht Singh of Jodhpur elucidates that the institution of marriage was used by the royal Rajputs to negotiate and further consolidate their political and territorial expanse. One could notice up to as many as nine matrimonial alliances here into the clans of Chauhans and Bhati Rajputs, highlighting their significance in the existing clan hierarchy of the elite Rajputs, as names of Chouhan ninth Hemkanwarji and Navma Bhattiyani rani have been listed above. Three marital alliances into the *thikana* Sirohi, 2 alliance each into the *thikanas* of Kelawa, Osia, Mandsa, Sankhwas and one each in thikana Damade, Bhikamkaur, Damodar, Jamnagar, Dhatpara, Godedha, Vikukor, Retachan, Soyantar, Garhbariya, Ranasar, Jakhan, Beerlok, Lakhasar, Barmer, Nimbaj illustrates the wide territorial expanse into which Maharaja Takht Singh established matrimonial alliances. With as many as thirty marital ties in light, it is further suggestive of the predominance of the ethic of perpetuation and consolidation of the honour and status of the clan through multiple marital ties, over and above intersecting individual emotions of love, jealousy, anxiety arising out of existing polygamous marriages, among multiple partners residing within the *janana deorhi*.

From the late seventeenth century we start to get evidence of another kind of marriage called *Khanda Vivah* among the royal Rajputs. The centrality of the principle of *aan* or honour in the making of Rajput identity expresses itself through this custom observed in Rajput society. It is interesting to understand how the *Khanda* or the sword of a Rajput raja embodied and personified his self-hood. This section is interested in looking into marriages of this exceptional kind called *Khanda vivah* often performed among the Rajputs, and would try to glean the rationale behind this kind of marriage where, in place of the bridegroom, the girl was wedded to the *Khanda* of the concerned raja.

Maharaja Takht Singh of Jodhpur had married thirty queens in total. Of those thirty marriages, this particular marriage had been accomplished by sending his '*khanda*' and not him going in person, was unique. We do find earlier references of *Khanda Vivah* from the reign of Maharaja Gaj Singh I, who had a *khanda* marriage on *margshirsh krishna beej* (second) of V.S. 1679 with Kalyande, the daughter of kachhwaha Jagroop Jagannath at Akbarabad. Maharaja Ajit Singh also had a *khanda* marriage with Maharani Kachhwahaiji.

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This marriage took place at village Chandal near Akbarabad.⁴⁰ We also get instances of sword-marriage alliances among Rajput and Marathas. Vidyanand Swami Shrivastava while discussing the nature of Rajput-Maratha marriages points out examples of sword-marriages between Rajput and Maratha rulers. For instance, Mahadji Scindia was the son of Ranoji Scindia by his sword-wife.⁴¹



(Image taken from Collection at MMPP, Jodhpur ; also cited in Robert Elgood's *Rajput Arms & Armour, The Rathors & Their Armoury At Jodhpur Fort* Vol.I, Niyogi Books, 2017)

The case study is done here to highlight how the marriage protocols were duly followed even in a situation where raja was not present in person, how power was represented through raja's sword, the many ways in which the status of the rani to be, was negotiated beforehand, thus securing a position in the contentious *janana deorhi* cementing the status and position of the household she belonged to, within the household of the raja, further accentuating the

⁴⁰ For details see, Vashistha, V.K. 'The Custom of Khanda Marriage: A Study with Reference to the Khanda Vivah ri Bahi of Maharaja Takht Singh (1843-1873 A.D.)' in Tanwar, Mahendra Singh (ed). Rajasthani Abhilekhon Evam Dingal Sahitya Mein Marwar Ka Rajnetik-Sanskritik Itihas, MMPP, 2020.

⁴¹ Shrivastava, Vidyanand Swami *Are Rajput-Maratha Marriages Morganatic?*, (Poona, 1952) p. 69.

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assertion that ranis were the representatives of the honour and status of their natal household in the *janana deorhi* of the raja.

In the practice of *khanda vivah*, when the sword of the raja was sent with officials of his court, following varied marriage protocols, the bride used to observe three *pheras* with the raja’s sword and for the remaining four, raja would himself proceed ahead from his territory towards the *dola* coming from the bride’s side, and when it reached near raja’s territory he performed the rituals. *Khanda vivah* also started to develop its own distinct set of rituals.

Here the case study would that be of the marriage of Maharaja Takht Singh of Jodhpur, (c.1843-1873).⁴²



(Image taken from Collection at MMPP, Jodhpur ; also cited in Robert Elgood’s *Rajput Arms & Armour, The Rathors & Their Armoury At Jodhpur Fort Vol.I*, Niyogi Books, 2017).

The attachments of the notion of ‘*aan*’ with the *khanda* of the raja and the very acceptability of this kind of arrangement by the bride’s family with due respect where groom remains ‘physically absent’, does incline us to analyse the parallels drawn and understood, between

⁴²*Byah ri bahi*, S.No. 832, V.S.1796- 1929, M.M.P.P., Jodhpur. This *bahi* contains details about the marriage ceremonies of rajas from Maharaja Sur Singh’s reign to Maharaja Takht Singh’s reign.

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the presence of the raja in person with the ‘manifested’ or ‘represented’ notions of honour and power equated with the presence of his sword in the Rajput society.

The *khanda* as a symbol of raja’s *aan* in person in Rajput ethos, represented him and all that he stood for. The gradual manipulation of the very ritual of marriage in the form of *khanda vivah* resonates the significance of political pragmatism once again, for the attainment of which institutional codes, in this case marriage were modified, and made conducive.



Image of Maharaja Takht Singhji with his *Khanda* collected from M.M.P.P., Jodhpur.

Ritualistic Codes of *Khanda Vivah*: Many Ways of Sustaining Status

The information about this *khanda* marriage comes in from the *Khanda Vivahri bahi*⁴³ which pertains to the marriage of Maharaja Takht Singh of Jodhpur with his eighth Maharani Jadechiji Pratap Kanwar of Jamnagar⁴⁴ accomplished by sending his ancestral personal ‘*Khanda*’ from Jodhpur. It records in great detail the description of the marriage, describing

⁴³ Nagar, Mahendra Singh (ed.), *Khanda Byah/Vivah ri bahi*, Jodhpur, 2004

⁴⁴ Nagar (ed.) *Khanda Vivah bahi*, p. 36.

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the rituals performed, the treatment given to the guests from the bride's side, also their occasional grievances raised at times, as the treatment did not satisfy their status and expectations. This interesting document brings to light the rationale behind these kind of marriages in the royal household of Jodhpur, the significance attached to the '*Khanda*' of the raja, thus it being the custodian and upholder of Maharaja's power, *aan*, also 'representing' Maharaja at the marriage and equally well accepted by the bride's family.

It is worth exploring why the '*Khanda*' replaced the raja for marriage procession towards the bride's home. By gleaning through the available evidences, we find that in any of the following circumstances the '*Khanda*' was sent in place of the bridegroom himself : when the raja (bridegroom) did not find it possible to leave his seat of power unprotected or when due to political conspiracies the raja did not feel secure to go with marriage procession into another state or when the bride's parents were politically, socially or economically weaker in status compared to that of the groom's, in that case, both sides agreed to a *Khanda* marriage. If in a small state the sovereign ruler of a very big state were to personally go for marriage alongwith his army, elephants, horses, chariots, oxen, *jagirdars*, servants and relatives etc. with full retinue, the brides parents were bound to be financially burdened to a great extent. In such circumstances, *Khanda Vivah* was a more pragmatic alternative for the latter to give their daughter's hand in marriage without unbearable expenditure, to a powerful raja, so as to establish a political bond and an abiding friendship.⁴⁵

Another reason could have been when the distance involved was too long and without adequate means of communication, an arduous time consuming journey, thus demanding a long absence of the Raja from the capital which could not be undertaken. These reasons show the compulsions of political pragmatism restructuring and reshaping the institution of marriage itself.

In *Khanda* marriage, the *Khanda* personified its owner's '*aan*' and was sent with full procession and entourage etc. on an auspicious day (*shubhmuhurat*). Each day's description of the journey of the *Khanda* with marriage party was described in detail in the *bahi*. The *Khanda* was so respectfully conducted, as if Maharaja Takht Singh himself was present there. All the royal etiquettes and mannerisms were meticulously followed by the *sirayats*, *jagirdars*, *mutsaddies* and *khawas paswans* according to their status, *tajims* and

⁴⁵ For more details see, Nagar (ed). *Khanda Vivah ri bahi*

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kurabs (honours and precedence etc.), whose seats were in the same order as in a royal *darbar*, when the *Khanda* was being placed on the throne. Three *phas* had been taken by his *Khandawith* the bride at Jamnagar with all religious ceremonies and tradition. Later on Maharaja Takht Singh proceeded from Jodhpur to village Mogra (within his kingdom) as a bridegroom along with a *barat* (marriage party) and took the fourth *phera* (round of the sacred fire) with the bride to solemnise, the marriage.

The *Khandabar* started on *magh shukla teras* (thirteenth) of *samwat* year 1908 from Jodhpur via Sojati gate, Jalori gate and camped at night at village Mogra at 5 kos (about 10 miles) from Jalori gate. The camps, successively each night were at Rohat at 7 kos, Pali 8 kos, Gundoj Sanderao, Posalia, Erinpura Cantt, Sirohi (ruled by Deora Chauhans) Seenvada, Reodar, Mandar, Panthiwara, Dantiwara on Banas river, Palanpur, Sidhpur, Mandal, Beejana, Dhrangdhara, Halvad (the capital of Dhrangdhara state, Sarwadas Morvi. The camp at Morvi was for two days. All the *sardars* and *mutsaddies* collected in the tent of the Maharaja's *Khanda*, stood up to receive him. *Amal manuhar*, custom of offering opium to each other was performed. Bhagtan Gumani's troupe was singing and dancing outside the tent.

From Morvi onwards the successive camps were at Tankari, Dharol and Dhuwa. There the Jam's deputation, came to receive and brought provisions etc. Next day being Holi, the festival was celebrated with usual gaiety and the rituals of *holi*, *manglawan* were celebrated first at *mardana deorhi* and then at *janana deorhi*. *Puja* (the worship ritual) was performed by *rajvyas* and *rajpurohit* (royal priests). The offerings at the worship were taken by the *sewag* brahmins. It appears from this *bahi* that no ritual was curtailed or ignored during the journey. After six days the *Khanda* procession started towards Jamnagar. At Jamnagar, when the procession reached the *lagna mandap* (place of marriage) it was welcomed by *badbeda* (water pots with green leaves on top) by Jamnagar and twenty one *cauris!* (then a shell currency) were put in the *kalash* (water pot). After fifteen days journey, the *barat* reached village Mogra of Marwar, where the Maharaja Takht Singh went in royal procession and completed the of marriage ceremony by performing the fourth *phera* with the bride.

When we explore the particular reasons for which this Jamnagar marriage was performed as *Khanda* marriage, the following points come to light: most of Maharaja Takht Singh's marriages were '*dola*' marriages in which palanquins (*dolas*) of brides from very small states, from the house of subordinate *jagirdars* or ordinary Rajput families were brought to Jodhpur and the marriage was performed here, a place outside the fort or in special tented camps in

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gardens etc. up to which spot the bridegroom, Maharaja proceeded with full ceremonial entourage, procession and marriage procession.

The possible reasons for this particular *Khandavivah* of Maharaja Takht Singh might have been because Jamnagar though smaller, was a well known state, whose ruler was received by the Jodhpur Maharaja at 3/4 *kos* (roughly half a mile) outside the city of Jodhpur and unlike smaller states or *thikanas* it would not have suited Jamnagar to send a '*dola*' and also the distance between Jodhpur and Jamnagar was too long for the Maharaja's marriage procession consisting of elephants, horses, palanquins, chariots etc. to travel and therefore it was preferred to send the *Khanda* in order to represent him.

Anxieties and Tensions of *Khanda Vivah*

There were a range of anxieties and tensions working during the marriage procession. The *jagirdars*, *sardars*, *mutsaddies* and *najars* (the palace eunuchs who were appointed to safeguard the *jananadeorhi*) who went to Jamnagar in the *Khandabarat*, were not very satisfied with their treatment as guests there and so, had the Maharaja himself proceeded with full fledged *barat*, the arrangements may not have matched his status or '*aan*', possibly resulting in mutual conflict.

When Jam Sahib (the ruler of Jamnagar) invited the *Khandabaratis* (members attending the *barat*) to dine with him there was a silver *bajot* (low table for use while dining) for him but there were none for the *baratsardars*. On this the *kamdar* of Ashore *thikana* spoke out that *sardars* would not have dinner unless there are *bajots*. A search for *bajots* ensued and some sort of *patias* and *chaklotas* (small round wooden stands for preparing of *chapatis*) were placed. This reflects that there had to be proper arrangements made for all the categories of *baratis* according to their status, in order to maintain Rajput ethic of '*aan*' or else it could turn into potential cause for friction.

At the time of *seekh* (farewell), *najar* Harkaran, *deorhidars*, *waqai nawis* (event reporters) etc. were not satisfied with their *siropaos* (honorary dresses given as gifts, meant to cover from head to toe) as the same were much inferior to those of *khwaspaswans* (i.e. personal attendants of the ruler). Because of this, *Mardanideorhinajar*, *Harkaran* even refused to pay respects to Jam Saheb and receive the *siropao*.

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It comes to light that the Jamnagar house had also sent a set of queries to Jodhpur household after the betrothal, and the *Maharaja* caused a reply to be sent in writing to the queries. The queries were: what would be the 'status' and where would the Jamnagar princess be seated in *jananadarbar*? what maintenance grant of *Jagir* will be bestowed upon her? what would be the category and status of the *Khanda* entourage? what would be the residential arrangements for the families of the attendants given in *dahej* or dowry? and what would be sent in *salakataridastur* (a ritual performed for the brother of the princess). In response to these questions, it was stated that her status and seat would be just below the present queens senior to her in marriage, she would be given befitting *jagir* as per the tradition in Marwar, a *nohra* will be provided for the residence of *dayajwals* (attendants coming in dowry) and that on the completion of the marriage at village Mogra, befitting *poshaks* (dresses), ornaments etc. would be sent in *padla* (a marriage ritual) for the bride and *sala katari dastur* will be performed according to the traditions.⁴⁶

This brings to light the kind of anxieties that the bride's family had, before her marriage into another royal household and also the kind of specific queries and demands regarding the 'status' of the Rajput bride, that they raised and desired about in the *janana deorhi* of the Maharaja of Jodhpur.

On the other hand, the Jodhpur side also inquired, how far Jam Saheb would come to receive the *khanda* procession etc. It was decided that Jam Saheb would come two *kos* (roughly four miles) from Jamnagar to receive the procession, the *tajimi sardars* of Jodhpur would pay respect to Jam Saheb without dismounting, their complements paid with usual bowing would be replied by Jam Saheb by raising his hand above his head, the *rajvyas* and *rajpurohits* would embrace Jam Saheb and the Marwar sardars would do *nyochhavar* on Jam Saheb and would not present any *nazar*. One could notice here that even minute details were sorted out and agreed upon beforehand and these agreements were diligently abided by. Here the intense and clear detailing emphasizes the role of court protocols and etiquettes in upholding the 'aan' of the Maharaja in a distant land.

Senior jagirdars of Ahore (champawat), Rakhi (chauhan) and Mundiar (barhath); *khwas paswan khichi* (kola) *kushala*, *dhandhal amra*; *raj vyas*, *rajpurohit*, *najar*, *chobdar*, *chadidar* (staff bearers), *khwasanis* (lady attendants), maid servants of *khalsa* (those not affiliated to

⁴⁶ For more details see, Nagar (ed.) *Khanda Vivah ri bahi*, Jodhpur : 2004.

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any particular rani, but to the Maharaja), *deorhidars*, cashier, *kharnawis* (news bearer), *chowkidar* (guards), *naubat khana* (section of the musicians), *geeteranis* (ladies who used to sing), *purohitanis* (ladies of the priest's family), *paitan* (infantry), horses, elephants, chariot, palanquins etc. were all there in the *Khandabarat*. The presence of various categories of individuals from the Rajput royal household of Jodhpur attending this marriage, suggests the 'grandeur' in the life style of royal Rajputs in Jodhpur.⁴⁷

Nakkara, *nishan* etc. preceding the *Khanda*, were on the first and second elephant, followed by *bykhwaspaswans* and chariots. The order of precedence of the procession has been described as, *raikas* of *janana* and *mardana deorhis* on camels followed by *nishan* on elephant, *nakkara* on horse, *janana deorhi* horses, silver caparisoned horse, *janana* and *mardana deorhi* guards, *chobdar*, *harkara* (messenger) *bajawale*, *ghadiali* (time-keepers), soldiers, one cavalry horse, two state stable's horses and jagirdar Mundiar on horse back. Thus, the order of precedence in the procession of the *barat* itself highlights how systematically the hierarchy and status of these members who attended this royal marriage, was observed.

A detailed account of the *Khanda Vivah* discussed above illustrates among other things, the rituals of marriage ceremony, the significance attached to the *Khanda* as a symbol of Maharaja's 'aan' (honour) and legitimacy. These details highlight that these varied set of rituals which would have been otherwise performed with the maharaja present in person, were duly performed with the *Khanda* of the maharaja. This kind of strong affiliation of Maharaja's person with his sword delineates how power, legitimacy flowed not just in person of the king but also his robes, his belongings, his weapons, in this particular case, his sword.

Khanda marriage was then an accepted mode of marriage. The system continues till today in certain emergencies. The order of precedence in the marriage procession, well laid out arrangements being made for the varied categories of *baratis* in the marriage, gifts given to them, all this emphasizes the amount of effort which was taken by the bride's side to serve every one according to their 'status' and 'seat of power' in the court. It reflects that marriage served as a field where the difference and distinction in 'aan' was well displayed and exhibited. Concerns regarding the status of the new rani in her *janana deorhi*, being worked out before marriage, on the one hand, remained an attempt to ensure her set of privileges, on the other it was to uphold the status of the clan itself. Though the mention of varied kinds of

⁴⁷ Nagar, Mahendra Singh (ed). *Khanda Vivah ri bahi*

marriages further minimises the agency of royal women as individuals in deciding their husbands wherein political pragmatism seem to have overpowered personal choice, women did emerge as sole representatives of their clan inside the *janana deorhi* of the raja, consolidating its position.

CONCLUSION

A NOTE ON BRIDE'S DILEMMA: NATAL AND MARITAL AFFILIATIONS, TENSIONS AND POSSIBILITIES

There were instances of conflicts as well wherein it was not a smooth functioning of relations existing in a natal-marital dialogue. Conflict and competition between lineages could also enter the marital relationship itself. And conflict within marriages could escalate, drawing the wife's natal lineage into conflict with the husband and his lineage in turn. Rajput narrative traditions carefully record each of these marital or political alliances between lineages, as well as the conflicts generated by them. When juxtaposed against the modern idealization of Pre-modern Rajput marriages as having lasted to the death and beyond, the violence recorded in these Pre-modern accounts is startling.⁴⁸

Succession disputes were intrinsic to Pre-modern Rajput polity, given this system of polygamous marriages. Ranis from different clans were involved in intrigues on behalf of their sons. As Varsha Joshi has pointed out, the ranis used the status and resources of their natal clans in such struggles over the question of succession. The competition may have been intensified by the potential material rewards for the successful queen: the heir's mother had the highest position in the *janana* hierarchy and enjoyed special privileges even after the death of her husband. Intrigues over succession between co-wives were also exacerbated by the fact that the pre-eminent wife was not always the first queen to give birth to a son. Further, there are several instances of powerful clans demanding, as a precondition for a matrimonial alliance, the succession to kingship of the son from the proposed marriage. Under such circumstances, the oldest son did not necessarily have the backing of the most powerful kinship alliance. The ties of *sagacame* into play both against external enemies and in succession disputes, the enemy could be the sister's husband or wife's brother. Thus, Man

⁴⁸ For details, see Sreenivasan, Ramya, 'Honouring the Family'

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Singh Sonigara helped his nephew Pratap seize the throne from his elder brother and father's nominated heir, Jagmal⁴⁹.

The power of his wife's natal household was always a potential source of anxiety for the ruler or chief. The political compulsions driving clan exogamy impinged upon the status of the women within these marriages. The place of royal Rajput women was thus essentially tied to the needs of clan status and rank.

Ranis residing within the *janana deorhi* derived much of their status in the marital household from the degree of power and prestige wielded by their natal clans. Royal women would continue to be referred to as sister or daughter (*beti*) of the brotherhood from which they originally came.⁵⁰

Due to immense respect given to their women folk, and the clan, Rajputs never took names of their ladies after marriage instead they were always addressed by the name of their respective clan e.g Chauhanji, Tanwarji, Bhattiyaniji, Ranawatji etc.⁵¹ For instance:

Maharaja Ajit Singh of Jodhpur (c.1707-1724) and his ranis :

Rani's name, her father's name and *thikana*⁵² are listed below:

One could notice here that rani's name in her marital household includes name of her natal clan viz. Bhattiyaniji, Chawanji, Sisodiniji, Ranawatji etc. Another distinct feature of giving new names to the rani in her marital household has also been noticed.

1. Udotkanwar Ranawat *sasre ro naam Amolak de; Gaj Singh Rana naam Rajsinghot ri thikana Udaipur ri*. Here rani was called Udotkanwar Ranawat and she was given the name Amolakde in her marital household. Similar mention of rani's *thikana* affiliations have been followed in the subsequent listing :-
2. Rani Lalkanwar Bhatia; *Amar Singh Rawal Sabal Singhot ri thikana Jaiselmer ra*.
3. Rani Rajkanwar Chawan ; *Chaturbhuj Dayaldasot ri thikana Hotlu ra*
4. Rani Kilyankanwar Sisodini ; *Rao Prithi Singh Pratap Singhot ri thikana Dewaliya ra*
5. Rani Jaskanwar ; *Rao Chandrasen Gajsinghot ri, thikana Halode ri*

⁴⁹ Joshi, Varsha *Polygamy and Purdah: Women & Society Among Rajputs*, (Jaipur :1995), p.45, 64-65.

⁵⁰ Ziegler, 'Rajput Loyalties during Mughal period', p.254.

⁵¹ *Report Mardumshumari* 1891, p.20.

⁵² *Ranimanga Bhaton ri bahi*, Nagar, (ed.), p. 52-56

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6. Rani Ratankanwar Ladi Chawan ; *Fateh Singh Prithirajot ri thikana Roichari*
7. Rani Bakht Kanwar Gaur; *Kesari Singh Urjan Singh Vidhaldasot ri thikana Rajgarh Sopur ri*
8. Rani Meeraganwar Ladi Bhattiyani ; *Dalelsingh Rawal Ramsinghot ri thikana Derawar ri*
9. Rani Beejaykanwar Tanwar ; *Bakhsiram Jaswant Singhot ri, thikana Patan ri*
10. Rani Bakhtkanwar Chawan; *Raja Todarmal Chhatra Singhot ri thikana Neebrana ri*
11. Rani Jaitkanwar Sanchori; *Chawan Sesmal Baluwat ri thikana gaon Keechhari*
12. Rani Badankanwar Jadechi; *Lakha jamat Maychabtari thikana Nawanagar ri*
13. Rani Roopkanwar Devri; *Chhatrasingh rao Indrasinghot ri thikana Sirohi ra*
14. Rani Sadakanwar Chawadi; *Pirthiraj Udesinghot ri thikana Mansa ri*
15. Rani Chandranwar Shekhawat; *Sagatsingh Jagat Singhot ri thikana Manorpu ri*
16. Rani Chanankanwar Sisodini; *Ummedsingh Jagat Singhot ri thikana Saypur (Shahpura)*
17. Rani Ladi Chawan Sanchori; *thikana Chitlane ri*

Given the predominance of patriarchy, it would be legitimate to expect inheritance of family name from the father's line of descent and for women to adopt the husband's family name after marriage, much as happens at present but as we have noticed in the discussion above, this was not the case among royal Rajputs. The significance of clan seems to be higher than that of the individual.

If we look at the case of Mughals, we find that the names of females in Mughal household - daughters, wives, sisters - were freely mentioned in the early sources. From Akbar's time onwards, however, such names - particularly names of royal wives- began to get omitted. Instead, their identities are established, if at all, with reference to the place of their birth or location, or some other indicator. Mothers henceforth commonly, though not invariably, came to be identified as Fatehpuri Begum or Udaipuri Begum or the daughter of so and so. Akbar felt so gravely concerned about the chastity of his female relatives that he denied them a personal name, an individual identity that was open to public gaze. It appears that he had learnt this particular method of protecting women's chastity from the Rajputs. It is rare to find the personal names of princesses in Rajput sources once they are married; they are then

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usually identified with reference to the name of their father or, more commonly, that of their clan after their marriage into another clan.⁵³

Shifting our attention towards the significance of ties of love and affection and also duty that ranis expressed towards their natal household through an interesting set of details, we get information about how ranis used to send gifts and other valuable items required on the occasion of their sister's marriage from her marital household.

Rani Ranawatji of Jhalamand (rani of Maharaja Takht Singh's of Jodhpur c.1843-1873) sent entire range of items needed for *preetibhoj* (breakfast organized during marriage celebration), ornaments, clothes, utensils etc. for the marriage of her sister Pratapkanwar from her marital household of Jodhpur.

List of items sent for *preetibhoj* included:

- 13 *aata ra thela* (13 bags of flour)
- 1 *besan ra thela ro katha meli ne aayo* (1 bag of gram flour)
- 1 *lun ro thelo* (1 bag of salt)
- 1 *cheena ri dal ro thelo* (1 bag of pulses)
- 1 *mircha lal ro thelo likhaya aayo*⁵⁴ (1 bag of red chillies)

Evidence of giving of *dahej* comes in from this particular bahi, where Rani Ranawatji sent in *dahej* (dowry), utensils viz. *kalas, chari, parat, thal, katordan, lota, kaansi ke batake, jhara, dukania, thalia, kudchia, deewra, doria, bajot, tawa* etc.

Various varieties of clothes were sent, for instance:

- 8 *dupatta kesariya chilidar*
- 1 *dupatto kasumal kiran jwaran ro*
- 2 *sadiyan 2 kasumal*
- 1 *dupatto khiyadar jaali ro lapo jwaran ro*
- 1 *kaanchali kasumal kabiyadar gota ri*
- 1 *chamari 1 sona ri chhapa ri gota ri*

⁵³ Mukhia, Harbans, *The Mughals of India*, Blackwell 2004 ; Also see, Nainsi, *Marwar ri Pargana ri Vigat*, Vol.2, (ed.) N.S.Bhati, p.443, (Jodhpur, 1969).

⁵⁴ *Maharaja Takht Singh ri Rani Ranawat ri behan re vivah ri bahi*, S.No.737, V.S.1924, phalgun vad 8, M.M.P.P., Jodhpur.

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2 *mandi pagan 2*

1 *lakir navri 1 halki lakir tesi*

2 *dupatto kasumal kheenkhap halko*

9 *chundayiya nag katir ra chhapa ri*

Description in this bahi primarily of the kind of gifts sent from the royal household of Jodhpur by Rani Ranawatji on the occasion of marriage of her sister seemed to be an accepted way of doing things and offerings sent from the rani's marital household to her natal household on occasions like marriage, possibly was well supported by the Jodhpur household as a significant customary gesture expressing rani's contribution on her sister's marriage.

Concerns of Rajput ranis for their duties towards their natal household remained a significant aspect of their lives. Be it sending of gifts or *dahej* at the time of marriage in their natal households or providing assistance to their kin, a Rajput queen remained attentive towards her natal family and there evolved a code of matrimonial alliances based on the system of caste endogamy and clan exogamy regulations thus widening the marriage pool, and strengthening and consolidating *kul-bhaiyad* structures.

The centrality of the institution of family in the Pre-modern Rajput states remained intrinsic and as the regional Rajput kingdoms attempted the transition from clan-based to monarchical polities, the kinship network and the family further became the focus of intense political and symbolic engagement.⁵⁵

The involvement as well as participation of royal women though at the surface might appear to be indirect or passive in nature but the processes of constantly negotiating, asserting and preserving the '*aan*' of their natal lineage within their marital households and on the other hand upholding the 'honour' of their marital household expresses the complexities of the dual challenge that the royal women had to engage throughout their lives at varied levels.

To conclude, it has been attempted here in this paper to explore the ways in which the marital alliances were negotiated to meet up with the political realities as well as economic exigencies of the world of the royal Rajput family and State. The royal Rajput women through the matrix of their marital ties into various other powerful and respectable royal households were 'invested' for their instrumental role in preserving the '*aan*' of their

⁵⁵ For more details see, Sreenivasan, Ramya 'Honoring the Family'.

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respective natal household and lineages. The ethic of honour that a Rajput woman sustained for her natal household became her pressure point of negotiating her own status and privileges within the *janana deorhi* of Jodhpur royal household.

Thus, one could notice here that marriage was not a mere socio-cultural ritualistic act among the royal Rajput society. It served as a communicative medium, creating support networks in order to consolidate power. Thereby, if we are inclined to conclude marriage as a strategy exploited by the royal Rajputs for facilitating political pragmatism it would be difficult not to view royal women as the channel in the person of whom, the *aan*/honour and power of her clan was embodied. Royal women as daughters remained custodians of their clan's honour both in their natal as well as marital households. Without understating the role of the *kul-bhaiyad* network which somewhere compelled the women to be 'given' in marriage in lieu of peace and power, also unknowingly provided them the 'power' in the form of the status of their natal household which remained an intrinsic feature of these women entering the *janana deorhi* of the raja to 'negotiate' and 'establish' their position vis-à-vis other wives of the raja and also in determining the nature of favours and privileges attributed to them.

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